THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A reference was received from Government of Kerala for exploring the possibility and to make use of Coir Geo-textiles for construction, development and strengthening of border roads.

(c) and (d) Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has considered the use of Coir Geo-textiles in road construction. After discussions with Coir board officials, it has been decided that BRO, jointly with Coir Baord, will take up a road stretch for laying the woven Coir Geo-textile to ascertain its efficacy and economy.

Joint sea patrolling in Mumbai

790. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether joint sea patrolling by the Navy, Customs and the State Police in Mumbai need funds to procure equipment to check smuggling;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the measures taken to provide funds and equipments to check ISI activities?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) The hardware, equipment and financial resources of the Navy and the Coast Guard are reviewed and upgraded from time to time. The Navy and Coast Guard carry out regular surveillance and patrol to protect the interest of the country. In this regard special operations in coordination with other Central and State Government agencies are also carried out.

Indian soldiers detained in Pak jails

† 791. SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that even now many Indian soldiers have been detained in Pak jails;

(b) if so, the number of soldiers detained therein; and

†Original Notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

(c) the steps being taken by Government to get those Indian soldiers released?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) As per information compiled on the basis of representations received from the family members of the missing defence personnel including representations from Missing Defence Peronnel Relatives Association, there appear to be 54 Indian defence personnel as prisoners of war in the custody of Pakistan authorities. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), which is the nodal Ministry on this issue, has been taking up this matter on several occasions with Pakistan at various levels, including that of Prime Minister. During his visit to Pakistan on 20-21 February, 1999, Prime Minister raised this issue with the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the two sides appointed a 2-member Committee at Ministerial level to examine humanitarian issues, including that of the missing POWs. The matter was also raised in the official level discussions held with Pakistan on March 5-6, 1999. The Pakistani side stated that there were no Indian POWs in its custody, but agreed to re-examine the matter afresh. The Government would continue to purposefully pursue this matter with Pakistan.

Tension in Kargil Sector

792. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total expenditure on accomplishment of the Kargil Operation;

(b) whether tension still prevails on this sector of the border; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the action being taken to meet any eventuality?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) The total expenditure incurred on the Kargil Operation is estimated at Rs. 1984.00 crores.

(b) and (c) Troops are deployed in the Kargil Sector along the Line of Control in a virtual eyeball to eyeball contact with Pakistan army. Pakistan continues to resort to unprovoked firing in this sector to inflict casualties on our troops and portray J&K as a flash point to